QUANTA

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Aug/Sept/Oct 2008

Information on the Association

Membership of QUANTA, the independent QL user group, is by annual subscription. The Membership Secretary can supply full details. Copies of the association's constitution & annual accounts are available from the Secretary. There is an extensive software library. There are active national subgroups. Details are given in the Member's Guide and in this magazine.

QUANTA Committee - 2008/2009

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES   John Mason

The suggestion has been made on ql-users list that there are QUANTA members who are neglected and disadvantaged because they are still using the original QL without the latest gizmos, and the question **"What Can QUANTA Do For You?"** was posed.

QUANTA provides a HELPLINE service. The demand for help has been almost non-existent. Is it because owners of original QLs are very shy, or is it that they are more than happy with the systems they are using? Original QL owners please tell HELPLINE about any unsolved problems you may have.

The suggestion, however, prompts two questions -
1. **What Have You Done For QUANTA Over The Last 5 YEARS? And**
2. **What Are You Wiling To Do For QUANTA?**

The Not So Good News -

At the 2008 AGM we had a volunteer for the job of Editor. Unfortunately that was as far as he got!

The Good News -

1. John Gilpin has kindly stepped in once more to fill the breach (Thank you John), and you have had your magazine albeit a little late at times.

2. Dilwyn Jones has kindly volunteered to be Acting Librarian (Thank you, Dilwyn). I cannot guarantee for how long. Any volunteers?

QUANTA Committee, like all other committees, has 3 principal tasks -
1. To carry out the necessary administration
2. To help & encourage
3. To respond reasonably to members questions.

With my Best Wishes for a Joyful Christmas and a Happy New Year

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Please ensure that your copy reaches the editor on or before that date. Copy on Paper or Magnetic Media or by Email.
All Contributions are Welcome.
Copy on Microdrive or Floppy Disk or CD to be accompanied by hard copy printout.
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EDITORIAL   John Gilpin

Continued lack of contact with Tony Hill - our new Magazine Editor - means that once again I have been asked to put together the remaining issues of QUANTA Magazine for this year. Unfortunately my time commitments have not changed any over recent months and I have agreed with the QUANTA Committee to publish two - three monthly issues for August/September/October 2008 and November/December 2008 / January 2009. This will bring us to the end of Volume 25 and I hope to publish a celebratory issue (Quanta is 25 years 'young' in February 2009) for February/March 2009 to cover all the required information for the AGM and "QL is 25" Celebration Workshop in Coventry in April - see elsewhere in this issue for further details. By the time that takes place, we hope to have had a positive response to our ongoing appeal for some new blood on the QUANTA Committee - Nomination forms are included with this issue. Surely, after 25 years, one or two of you are prepared to put back just a little of what (we hope) you have taken out over the years and relieve the continuing pressure on the few of us who are endeavouring to keep things going on behalf of you all.

My sincere apologies, once again, for the lateness of this issue but on return from my holiday, in the middle of October, I experienced a rather dramatic System CRASH on my PC which has meant rebuilding the whole thing from the O/S up with all the time consuming involvement of recovering data - emails etc. - before I was able to get started on this issue. I sincerely hope that things will go a little more smoothly over the next few months.

As it is likely to be sometime during January when you receive the final issue of this volume, may I (on behalf of myself and my Co-Editor - John Mason) take this opportunity of wishing all our members, their families and QLing friends A Very Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year 2009.

Cheers!

John Gilpin. (Joint Editor)

Quanta Magazine
Annual General Meeting 2009
Notice No.2

Nominations are invited for the posts of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer together with the ordinary members of the Committee. The posts of Librarian, Magazine Editor, News Editor, Helpline, and WebMaster will be drawn from the Committee. Proposers, Seconders and Nominees must be current members of Quanta. Nomination forms are with this magazine.

The Committee normally meets face to face three times a year, immediately after the AGM, and either at a Workshop or at a venue near equidistant from all Committee members. Between those meetings, business is conducted by E-mail.

I would like to remind you of the Clauses of the Constitution that refer to Election to Committee, Nominations for Committee Posts, and Special Resolutions.

Any member seeking election to the committee shall declare any commercial interest that he or his employer has in the activities of QUANTA or it's members.

All nominations for committee posts and any proposition to be put to the Annual General Meeting other than the Ordinary Business stated in clause 8.1 of the QUANTA Constitution shall be signed by the proposer and seconder and be sent to the Secretary and be received before 1st February so that they can be circulated with the notice convening the meeting.

Any proposition to change the Constitution shall be by Special Resolution. A Special Resolution requires to be sent with the notice convening a General Meeting giving twenty-one days notice and requiring a two-thirds majority of those voting.

Sarah Gilpin, Secretary

QUANTA COMMITTEE PRECIS   Sarah Gilpin

The QUANTA committee met at the Allesley Hotel (the venue for the "QL is 25" celebrations) on October 26th. 2008. The conference coordinator was present to show us the rooms that we will have and to discuss our event requirements. The Imperial suite will house the workshop and is 10 metres by 14 metres with plenty of power sockets. The Harmer room is next door and will comfortably house 30 seats for talks and demonstrations. The car park is large and parking is free. Access to the hotel is in the village of Allesley, just off the A45. There is a regular bus service from both Birmingham Airport and from Coventry town centre.

Quanta Magazine

It has been agreed that Sarah Gilpin shall contact all traders and guests to invite them to attend at Allesley on the weekend 18th/19th April 2009. Dilwyn Jones will arrange the speakers for the Saturday and on Sunday morning will chair a Question and Answer forum. Questions should be with the committee by noon on Saturday 18th April, if you have a question and are unable to attend the weekend please email your question to the Secretary.

There will be a 3-course dinner on the Saturday evening at 8.00 pm and numbers have to be confirmed by Saturday noon. The committee agreed that all prices for accommodation and for the dinner will be listed in the next issue of the magazine. Payment is to be made to Quanta who will settle with the hotel on behalf of all members.

Changes have been discussed for the membership subscriptions and the option of charging postage to Europe and overseas separately. John Gilpin has an article in this magazine regarding the changes.

The original magazines, from Volume 1 Issue 1 onwards, are being archived by scanning and OCRing before being put onto a CD, DVD or other suitable medium. This is a slow process as the early magazines were not easily readable. John Gilpin would welcome any offers to proof read the results, please. Sarah and Dilwyn have offered to proof read, but any additional offers would be appreciated.

The committee are looking into a 'Content Management System' for the Web site, that would enable sub-groups and individuals to post information in a draft form to the Web site. The Web Master (Dan Abbott) would then check for consistency of layout and style before making the information live. The committee decided that further discussion was required to assess the best system available.

There has been no contact with Tony Hill for a few months, so John Gilpin has agreed to compile two magazines to cover six months and has agreed to continue compiling the magazine until next April. The committee appeals once more to the membership for volunteers to join the committee and take on the role of Magazine editor and any other roles which are currently unmanned. It was agreed that an apology for the lateness of the magazine should be put on the web site and other appropriate places.

A suggestion had been put forward that Quanta should look at the re-issue of Jan Jones's book in electronic format. At the same time Quanta

should consider buying the copyright of Rich Mellor's "The SBASIC/SuperBASIC Reference Manual", at which time Rich would update it before re-issuing it in electronic format. The committee has looked at the costs involved and the likely demand for these products and decided that neither is a viable economic proposition.

Nominations are to be requested for a new Chairman as John Mason will stand down in April under the rules of the constitution. In the event of another Officer accepting a nomination as Chairman, there will be a requirement for the vacant post to be filled. Therefore the nomination form should include ALL Officers. The current committee is seriously undermanned and any nominations for additional members would be welcomed. Please remember that it is YOUR committee for YOUR association. APATHY is more likely to close QUANTA than anything else. Nomination papers are included with this issue of the magazine. Please ensure that they are returned by January 1st. 2009 to enable the AGM Documents to be prepared.

Season's Greetings to all our Members. Have a GREAT Christmas and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in April 2009.

QUANTA Committee confirms that the 25th Annual General Meeting will be held at The Allesley Hotel, Coventry, England. CV5 9GP

Members are invited to the celebratory workshop opening Saturday April 18th 2009 and closing on Sunday April 19th 2009. The AGM will be held at 2.00 pm on Sunday.

The programme will include:
- Talks
- Repair desk
- Interactive problem solving
- Other activities

A celebratory dinner will be held on Saturday night at 7.30 pm. Cost £20.00

A number of B & B rooms, single (£65.00), double or twin (£71.00) have been provisionally booked for both Friday and Saturday night. Anyone wishing to stay, please contact QUANTA secretary Sarah Gilpin at secretary@quanta.org.uk

Please state whether you wish to:-
- book a room,
- provide a talk or demonstration
- attend the dinner
- set up an activity

The hotel is easily accessible from Birmingham Airport, so we hope our Overseas members will come and join us. Directions will be published in the next magazine or are available at:

http://www.allesleyhotelcoventry.co.uk/Allesley_Coventry_Hotel_Directions.html

WE WILL BE CELEBRATING, WILL YOU BE THERE?

VIRTUAL REALITY   Steve Poole

E ver since 1985 I have been developing 3D perspective programs which produce animations on the QL. The discovery of true perspective was a major breakthrough by renaissance artists, and revolutionised not only painting, but also philosophy.... everything depends on your 'point of view'! No wonder mankind has so many different religious and intellectual attitudes to life! To produce a screen that shows a scene in perspective, you have to calculate where light rays entering the eye would cut an imaginary screen between you and the subject. This can be calculated quite easily using basic trigonometry, although the trajectories of the light rays need to be traced back to their light source using an algorithm known as 'ray-tracing' to calculate shadows.

But things are much more complicated than this physiologically... so we must ask ourselves : what is going on inside the brain? Well, light waves enter the eye and turn images upside-down and back-to-front as they pass through the lenses. They then hit the retina where they excite various light-detecting cells, each of which have an amplifying nerve connection. Then all the nerves from the retina are gathered together in the optic fibres which thereby enter the brain. Within the brain, the nerve fibres pass through certain filtration and coordination centres where the impulses are sorted and redistributed to the visual cortex which creates a virtual image of one's surroundings, supplemented by data coming from the other senses of hearing touch, equilibrium etc. All of this information is ponderated and certain data is stored in areas of associated memory cells.

What is the end result of all this? Sit in front of a window and look out of it. You can see a perfectly clear image extending perhaps many miles into the distance containing a prodigious quantity of detail and you automatically experience its height and depth ranges. Turn your head slightly : What you see seems to stand still, even though your head and eyes are moving... (Remember, animals such as rabbits have a 360° panoramic mental image of all that lies around them. The 'common sense' of we humans makes it very difficult for us to visualise such strange concepts: 360 degree vision, or gravity just being 'curved space-time'. So just try to calculate the enormous number of 'image reality pixels' that the brain calculates instantaneously so you can reconstruct what exists 'outside of you'. We are talking in terms of tens of millions of brain cells activated per millisecond. And we only see what we are aware of, although the brain can perfectly sense what is lying around us!

It may surprise you to discover that you do not really see the world around you, but just a reconstructed figment of your imagination! This does not mean that all is illusion : Just walk into a lamp-post to see if it is really there... This becomes even more evident when you think about dreams : while you lie motionless in the dark, the brain is capable of producing 3D 'feely' stereo

animations from any points of view, including some angles that you have clearly never experienced! No wonder people who experiment with such image-deforming drugs as LSD may end up having 'bad trips'. And who knows exactly what hallucinations are experienced by witch-doctors in a state of trance, or unfortunate schizophrenics in states of crisis??

But what is the relevance of all this to the QL? Well, so far I have only produced 3D animations on a flat screen. But we have two eyes, so the brain receives two separate images of our surroundings, that is, stereoscopic data which the brain then has to combine into just one solid image of the world we see around us. And this is where I am stuck : I do not possess stereo vision, so I cannot experiment with writing stereo animations... as all I would get is double vision. Many people suffer from this complaint, which eliminates them from real-life games where, for example, you have to catch a ball whose trajectory you cannot therefore calculate accurately. Dropsy! (There is a solution : Certain stereo goggles flick images to each eye alternately, and this gets the brain's stereo images to fuse in a startling way, but unfortunately this technology is neither cheap nor widespread. Visit France's Futuroscope Science Park at Potiers to test your own vision using many different technologies).
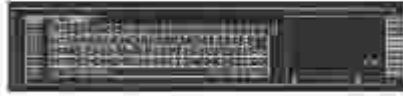
Actually, the 2D mouse as we know it will soon disappear in favour of 4D mice such as those used in the latest 'Wii' tennis games. You wave your device around you in the air and miniaturised accelerometers inside it calculate its exact position and trajectory. Virtual reality goggles then let you see a solid stereo image of your surroundings and the computer calculates all relevant collision points if you hit the 'ball' to send it rebounding back.

Many years ago, one or two QL programs demonstrated simplified stereo techniques with random dot imagery, but nothing recently. If the QL is to survive, we will need some stereo programs that calculate how to split 3D animations into two images. Personally, I have seen no detailed information on this technique, although no doubt I could slowly work out how to do it. (Perhaps all that is necessary is to calculate two 'screens', one for each eye, but as I said before, I can't do the experiments).

We are lucky that our brains will accept TV images as being real, as most animals will certainly not be fooled by such illusions. Flat images greatly simplify program coding. But we have to be careful what information we feed into the brain... just think how easily magicians can trick us into believing the illusions they create to amuse us! Ditto for esoteric sects that prey on people's gullibility to get them to believe irrational things.

So virtual reality and its dangers will soon be upon us. Let us hope it will not get into the hands of manipulative developers. May the QL be ready to take us into the future, a future of stereo virtual reality...

NEXT QUANTA SPONSORED EVENT

The 25th Annual General Meeting will be held at the
Allesley Hotel, Coventry, England. CV5 9GP

On Saturday April 18th. and Sunday April 19th. 2009.
The AGM will be held at 2.00 pm on Sunday.

All enquiries to Sarah Gilpin

secretary@quanta.org.uk

SUB-£100 NOTEBOOK COMPUTER   Dilwyn Jones

This is a summary of a recent discussion on the QL-Users mailing list. The discussion started after Dilwyn Jones started a new thread asking if anyone had any experience of using the Elonex One computer, which was advertised at the time with a selling price of £99 and had been reviewed in Computer Active magazine. Previous discussion had centred on the higher priced Asus Eeepc, and the possibilities of running QPC2 on it either natively under Windows XP, or via WINE on Linux, or possibly a version of uQLx running on Linux.

The first reply came quickly from Richard Kilpatrick, who was not very enthusiastic about these cheap notebooks:

➢ They are underpowered, based on a Chinese MIPS CPU, in the case of the One (rubber keyboard tablet) at 300MHz/128MB RAM/1GB SSD, and the Onet at 400MHz. They run a dated version of Linux and lack hardware resources. They're also very overpriced for what you get in the case of the Onet/Maplin - the Asus Eee 701 is under £150 if you shop around and offers superior specification, the £189 price point mooted for the Elonex Onet is a mere £10 saving on the Acer Aspire One, which at £199 offers greater resolution display (1024 x 600), 8GB SSD (£229 gives 120GB HD), 512MB RAM (expandable to 1.5GB) and a 1.6GHz Intel CPU with decent cache and performance.

(The Elonex Onet is a slightly higher spec - and price - version, similar to the Maplin Minibook.)

➢ There are many good SCC (Small, Cheap Computer) models, Asus and Acer leading the market, but the MSI Wind (also sold as an Advent), and Dell's forthcoming machine also offer good specifications for a decent price. The £40 (at most) saving you make on the Maplin model is costing you useful screen resolution, useful storage, useful RAM and most significantly, a useful CPU that can handle modern Linux distros comfortably. In addition the Acer offers the hardware hack inclined motherboard pads for a Mini PCI-e slot and SIM card slot that will allow an internal 3G modem, 3 USB ports, VGA out (lacking on the Elonex/Maplin, IIRC), and a very useful feature on the SSD models - TWO card

slots. One SDHC slot for storage expansion, and one "card reader" with support for various formats.

QL on a SCC? Fantastic idea. Love to have a good QL environment running under Linux on my Acer or Eee.

Richard clearly felt that despite his wish to have a good QL environment running on these systems that Elonex hadn't really produced something that was right for the market here, and I thought that this might have killed the discussion dead in its tracks. However, Malcolm Cadman entered the discussion with further information and comment:

➢ I have just bought the October issue of PC Pro magazine, and Asus, who make the Eee PC have a massive 12 page advertising booklet within it. So, they do a very wide range of products. In the notebook (mini-laptop) PC range the lowest priced is the Eee PC 4G - with an Intel Mobile processor, Linux OS, 7" (800 x 600) display, 512Mb memory, 4GB SSD - priced at £169.36 RRP ex VAT. So, a sub-£100 notebook is still a way off, as yet. The highest priced in the notebook PC range is the Eee PC 1000 - Intel Mobile Atom 1.6Ghz processor, Linux OS, 10" (1024 x 600) display, 1024Mb memory, 40GB SSD - priced at £314.04 RRP ex VAT. The equivalent model with a standard 80Gb hard drive is priced at £297.02 RRP ex VAT.

➢ The rivals in this market are starting to appear. Like the new MSI Wind U100 - Intel Mobile Atom 1.6Ghz processor, Windows XP OS, 10" (1024 x 600) display, 512Mb memory, 80GB hard drive - priced at £281 RRP ex VAT.
The other mini-laptop already available is the Acer Aspire one -Intel Mobile Atom 1.6Ghz processor, Linux OS, 8.9" (1024 x 600)   display, 1024Mb memory, 8GB SSD - priced at £196 RRP ex VAT.

➢ Thus, it is probably better to think of a sub-£300 or sub-£200 potential price range for these smaller portable computers at present. Although, that is around 2/3 rds to a 1/2 the cost of well specified regular portable PC. The mini-laptops have the smaller size for even greater portability, yet not as well as specified as standard portable PC. However, they do have features like wi-fi, USB ports, and Ethernet, etc.

➢ I guess, with the right effort and software, a QL system emulator will run on many of these mini-laptops.

Malcolm's email brought others into the discussion. Derek Stewart commented that he could probably buy these systems in quantity for less than the prices quoted, but was unsure if there was a market for them as a "QL" system and invited feedback. The question then arose of whether Windows ran "native" on these systems or was it via some form of Linux interface such as WINE? Norman Dunbar responded with this information:

➢ It is indeed a native OS. The Asus EEEEEEEEEEEEEE (that's the Yorkshire version) came out as a Linux system 'only'. It seems that MS 'talked' to Asus and lo, an XP version was the result. I believe that it is a cut down version of XP to run in under 1GB RAM (and not to run if there is ever more!) and some other restriction like one CPU and no extra cores and so on. There may be more or less restrictions. MS are planning to have XP available for small laptops like these only - they want everyone to run Vista instead and are trying to stop XP. It will run on sub-notebooks only. Of course, they have announced that Windows 7 (eh?) will be out in one year - so they have obviously given up on Vista.

Richard then came back with further comment:

➢ You don't need WINE; Acer's Aspire One 120GB, Asus Eee 900/1000 series and others like the Dell Mini 9 all support or ship with Windows XP. It's possibly, albeit cramped, to run Windows XP on an Eee 701. What would be interesting, to me at least, would be a "native" QL OS for this platform. Something that uses a cut-down Linux kernel for I/O but is essentially a QL when you power it up. It would be fast, efficient and interesting. The lack of a hard disc is not an issue for many people. 8GB is plenty, 4GB is tolerable. Remember when your main desktop computer only had 40MB of HD space. The Eee and Aspire One are leading the marketplace with good value products; these should definitely be looked at - the Eee 701 is now £150 ex. VAT.

A response to the comment about the lack of hard disc pointed out that the entire Quanta software library could be stored easily on one CD. QL software is not very space-intensive, so the 4GB and 8GB solid state storage devices would be quite adequate when used as a "QL".

Malcolm Cadman then commented on the price points of the Linux and Windoze XP versions of these notebooks:

➢ With most of these mini-laptops the Linux OS is usually the supplied one. Although they can be used with Windows XP. I guess that the "to market price" is lower when using an Open Source OS like Linux. Although, it is not free.

Malcolm also commented that:

➢ Yet, these mini-laptops are an interesting market. I guess that we will all get one at some time. Because we are always interested / fascinated by any new technology that is around.

Per Witte then joined the discussion from Norway with his experiences of using the Eeepc:

➢ After using the eeePC 701 for a while, I gave it up as too limiting for my purposes. The battery life is ****, the fan whirs incessantly because the thing produces far too much heat. It also seems stupid to put up with a 7" screen when the box is more like 10. So all in all, after the initial rush I find I need something a little more sophisticated to get by on the move whilst having a real PC at home. The 901 seems a lot more promising but they're still flogging the inferior 900s here, so it'll have to wait. On the other hand, a couple of hundred ££ more will get you a real sub notebook..

Jochen Merz then joined in reporting his experiences of using his girlfriend's notebook computer:

➢ I was able to use the (MSI) Wind for a short while (Andrea bought one for herself)... Excellent machine: large display, hard disk, WinXP, Bluetooth, WLAN, no noise and very fast. QPC runs very well :-) And the resolution is fine for QPC. For Windows programs, I miss more lines on the display (you have to scroll a lot!) but Andrea says you get used to it. She replaced her 17" (well working!) Acer laptop by the Wind... weight and no noise are worth trading in the resolution for, she says. She's missing the keypad,though... but that hardly fits into THAT size ;-)

Richard then pointed out:

➢ The instant you cross into the £300 needed for the MSI Wind or upmarket Eee models, then you can get a dual core 13" laptop from Currys or elsewhere for £280ish. Unless you REALLY want the tiny form factor, it's not worth the effort.

Malcolm Cadman added this:

➢ The mini-laptop devices are interesting, yet still developing in capability ... which is changing all the time. Which is why the MSI Wind U100 has been seen as a successor / rival to the Eee PC range.

As the discussion began to point out that it seemed you had to spend as much or more as you would on a conventional laptop to get a decent one of these notebook PC systems, Paul Holmgren joined the discussion from the USA:

➢ Right now in the states there is a retail chain selling a Compaq laptop, Intel dual core, 2 giggles ram, 160giggles HD, 15.4" screen, Wireless and Vista, US $ is $430, that's about 245 of your pounds. This is being mentioned for comparison purposes.

The conclusion of the discussion seems to be that to a large extent you get what you pay for, and that for many a conventional Windows or Linux laptop might be the best way forward for many, although the small form factor (size), weight, and silence (in some cases!) of these little notebooks may be a deciding factor for some. You need to consider factors such as battery life too. Do bear in mind that some of these cheap notebook computers have small screens, which might be convenient for some in a mobile environment, though possibly might make a QL emulator hard to read on screen if used in the full screen resolution. A 512x256 display in full screen might be possible, but it does seem from the discussion that you would be well advised to see one of these machines in action if possible, research your purchase correctly and seek the experience of others before deciding. We have seen from the experience of several people that QPC can be run on some of these systems, either directly if they use Windows XP or by using the WINE system on some of the Linux models.

QMenu Version 8 Released

Jochen Merz has released the latest major update to his Menu Extension system, which lets machine code and S*Basic programmers use pre-defined pointer driven menus in their programs. The Menu Extension routines can also be used in commercial programs under license from Jochen Merz.

The name Menu Extension refers to the software itself, while the name QMenu refers to the guidelines and documentation on how to use the Menu Extension in your programs.

This is the first major update for some time. To quote Jochen Merz: "QMenu has not been advertised for quite a while, as the last version 7 manual was not updated in the past few years, while the Menu Extension itself got updated here and there."

Quanta brought you news of the release of the previous v7.68 in the June/July 2008 issue of the newsletter, and changes to recent versions were described by Roy Wood in QL Today June/August 2008, on page 52.

However, many updates in the Menu Extension and several user inquiries made Jochen think about releasing an updated version of QMENU. The manual has been completely revised and reflects all the changes and add-ons: from the assembler-side, from the BASIC programming side, and also from the user's side. You get a 42-page printed manual, a floppy disk with updates keys, updated help texts for QD Hyperhelp and updated and new examples.

Please note: The Menu Extension from version 7.65 onwards works only under SMSQ/E V2 (e.g. QPC2 or systems with high-colour screen drivers). If you run the "old" QL Pointer Environment, you should stick to your old Menu Extension. English only (a German version of MENU_rext is also on the disc, but no German documentation).

Some of the changes since version 7.04 (the last "officially" documented one) are:
• DSEL (Directory Select) allows up to 10 devices

- RSTR (Read String) has additional parameters (which force the values entered to be ints, floats, not empty, disables ESC etc.) It can also be used to enter hidden passwords.
- Timeout feature has been added to RPER (Report Error) and ITSL (Item Select).
- Some menus have got a MOVE facility.
- New menu SYSS (System select) provides fast selection of items from the Hotkey buffer history, currently running jobs, Things in your system, Executable Things in your system). Just one call and the System Select procedure collects all the information for you and provides it in a list - very easy selection.
- Hotkey buffer history now available in the file-select instead of cycling through the "previous" ones.

If you do not own an old version of QMENU, the package costs €24.90 + €5.- postage (about £21.50 + £4.30 postage in UK currency)

If you already own QMENU (Version 7 or before), update costs €17.90 + €5.- postage. (about £15.40 + £4.30 postage in UK currency).

A special offer price is also available to QL Today subscribers – see Jochen's web site at http://smsq.j-m-s.com for further details.

The File Select menu from the Menu Extension

The new Sys_Select$ menu

QDOS File System For Linux

Norman Dunbar has started an ambitious project where he intends to try to write code to allow Linux to access QDOS disks natively. Norman prefers to run QPC2 under Linux with the WINE system. Further details of progress with this system are on Norman's web site, and here I quote from the text on his web site:

"I quite like Linux, I certainly prefer it to Windows that's for sure. To this end and especially after Windows ate my Linux root partition just after Christmas 2007, I decided that my Laptop would be totally Linux - and so it is. Unfortunately, the one program I do use under Windows, QPC, cannot run under Linux/Wine properly yet. In addition, when it does run enough for me to use it, it cannot access QDOS floppy discs natively. Under Windows it uses direct sector access (I'm told this by Marcel) which is not going to happen under Linux.

So, in a fit of madness one day, I decided to read a lot and see if I could figure out exactly how to make a QDOS Floppy disc system run natively on Linux. It will be read only to start with but you never know. "

Screen Dump Of Norman's "QDOS File System For Linux" web page.

QL Forum

Norman Dunbar has been busy updating his web site http://qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk and has added a forum for discussion of all things QL, QDOS, SMSQ and so on. There's even an off topic area. At present, it is using over half of his allocated quota of disc, so it may not remain - it all depends. Norman says he can probably update his hosting account to get more space if need be.

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You can get to the forum from the web page above which has a link, or you can go direct via this link http://www.qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk/forum

Guests can only read existing postings so if you want to join in, please register and get discussing!

The Forum area has an initial set of topics starting with Assembler, Emulators, SuperBASIC and "Off Topic" (the latter for anything except religion, politics and possibly sport which Norman may veto!). There is also a Suggestion Box facility for new topics, so if you wish to set up a forum on "microdrives" for example, just register and post the suggestion.

The Forum index

In addition to the Forum, Norman's site is now organised as a Wiki. This allows other people to edit pages and so on. Just login to the part you require from Norman's home page at http://www.qdosmsq.dunbar-it.co.uk/ There is a "playground" area where you can play around with the Wiki before you let yourself loose on the real thing! You can register from Norman's site and it will send you an email with your password to allow you to start contributing to the site!

Screen dump of the Wiki pages

Lear PCBCad v6.53 & v6.54

Malcolm Lear has released v6.53 and 6.54 of his PCB Cad program in quick succession, to include some important changes to bring back old QL compatibility. He's not had a "real" QL for more than 10 years, so he's now started using the QL2K emulator to ensure correct QL operation. It turns out that the GWASS assembler has been inserting 68040 instructions, so he's gone back to using the GST program to ensure PCB Cad runs on all systems.

Here's a list of changes in version 6.53, taken from the REVISIONS.TXT file in the package:

- NC text drill file shows drill sizes in both metric and imperial.
- SMD device notification in placement file.
- Using QL2K to check QL compatibility.
- 68040 op codes removed. QL users may have had problems since 6.22. Moved back to GST assembler.
- Memory allocation routines rewritten to be more QL friendly.
- QL's must have full memory 768K expansion to run program.
- QL will not run any hi-colour commands.
- File loading problems with QL2K which may well be emulator issues.

And a list of changes in version 6.54, which were designed to make it easier to use the program from floppy disk, and to improve compatibility with early Sinclair ROMs.

- Internal bootup file loading simplified.
- Installation program updated with correct file names.
- Installation program now modifies 'Boot.bas'. This in turn sets the directory path in cad.bas.
- Now tested on ROM versions AH, JM, JS, and Minerva. There are still issues with Turbo's DEVICE_STATUS function when running on the QL2K emulator.
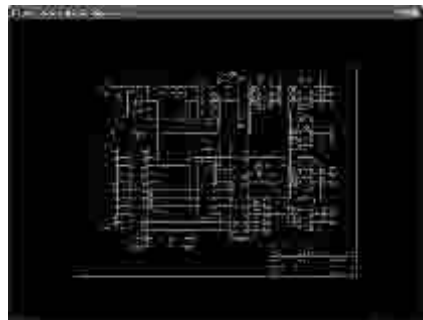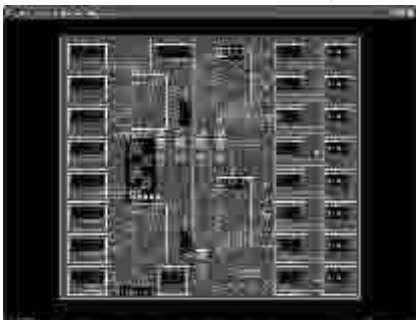- Null path is now possible.

The program can be downloaded from:-

www.dilwyn.uk6.net/graphics/index.html

Lear PCB Cad v6.59

Malcolm Lear has released v6.59 of his PCB Cad program on 4th November 2008. This version has now added the facility to draw circles and ellipses. The program has been updated several times recently, so here's a list of major changes in recent versions of the program, taken from the REVISIONS_TXT file supplied with the program:

6.56 02-10-08 Logical layer mode bug in dot matrix layer selection fixed.
Cadtk.bin and Printer.bin merged to save memory.
All automated file format updating now done in assembler.
File loader now removes duplicate information blocks.

6.57 Mode 8 graphics aspect ratio back to pre 6.22 while retaining changes needed for future pointer environment version. This produces much cleaner diagonals and gives the impression of higher resolution.
Screen mode toggle now disabled when hi-colour drivers detected.
More dot matrix issues resolved.
Invisible pads and blocks layers in logical layer mode are now invisible.

6.58 Element stats at bottom left of screen now include layer information.
Grid step and scale updated when component picked up or dropped.

6.59 04-11-08 Circle and ellipses can now be drawn using tracks.
Extension names changed to match style use in the SBASIC program.

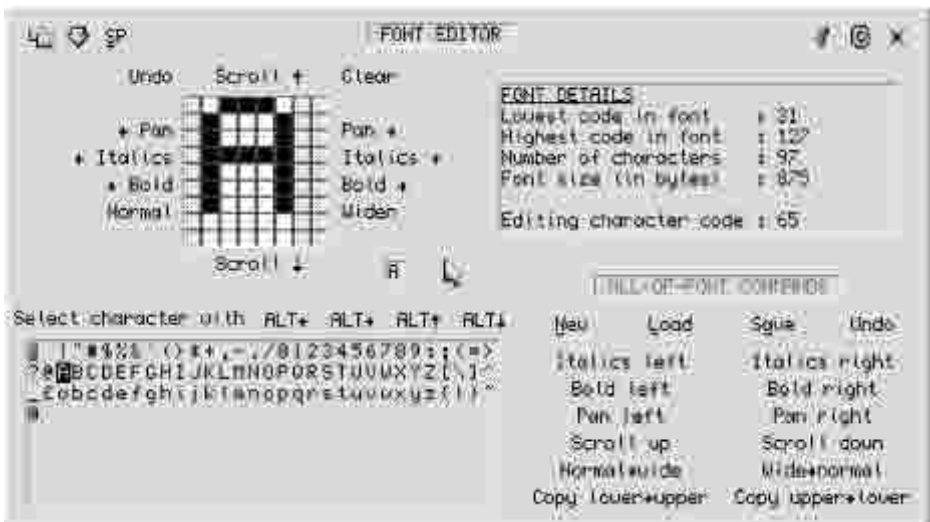**Sample screen dumps from Lear PCB Cad**

QL Font Editor

This is a new pointer driven font editor program from Dilwyn Jones. It lets you specify font character range as well as use the mouse (or cursor keys) to edit the characters. It has facilities to bolden or italicise individual characters, handle fat (8 pixel wide) fonts for CSIZE 1,0 use, pan/scroll characters around the editing grid and to copy upper/lower case ranges if you wish to do so. The program was written in SBASIC using Easyptr 4 and compiled with QLiberator 3.36 to produce a program which runs on all WMAN2 systems. Expanded memory is needed, as well as Toolkit 2. The program will run on SMSQ/E systems, or QDOS with pointer environment version 2 or later. Several example fonts are supplied with the package.

QL Font Editor can be downloaded from:-

www.dilwyn.uk6.net/fonts/fonted2.zip.

It is a freeware program.

Sample screen dump from Font Editor.

NEWS FROM GEORGE GWILT

George Gwilt writes:

The SQLUG web site cannot now be updated. In order that programs for which I am responsible can be made available I have put some of the latest updates on the site at

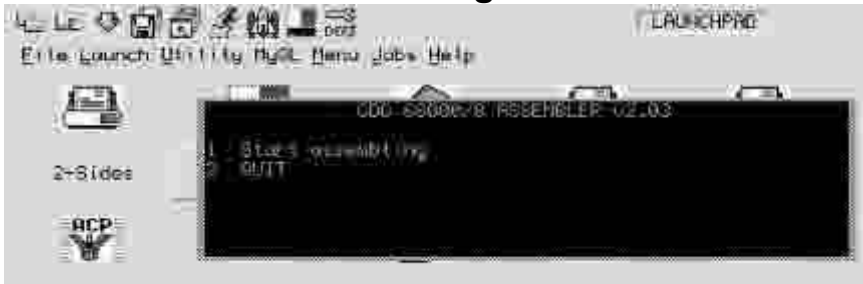http://web.ukonline.co.uk/george.gwilt/

GWASL Assembler v2.03

The latest version of Gwasl assembler by George Gwilt is now available from Dilwyn Jones's web site. Gwasl is the Lite version of George's Gwass assembler, the main difference being that Gwasl is suited for use on 68008 processor systems (i.e. a standard QL and some emulators) whereas the full Gwass assembler is designed to use the additional instructions present on later 680x0 systems. Gwasl is especially valuable for those following Norman Dunbar's Programming In Assembler series in QL Today magazine.

Changes listed for recent versions include TABs can be used as well as SPACEs and the maximum number of lines and labels is now configurable.

The program and its source code files can be downloaded from:

www.dilwyn.uk6.net/asm/index.html

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Gwasl assembler seen running with Launchpad.

Extract from Gwasl instructions.

SKYPE AND MESSENGER   Dilwyn Jones

I've just got myself onto both Skype and MSN Messenger. I am not experienced at using it yet (you all know what I'm like with Windoze!) so if anyone wants to contact me to let me practise using the system, please do get in touch when I'm online. Hopefully, I can do conversation, audio and video modes, although this laptop doesn't have an external headset microphone input so audio quality may be poor, until I get a USB headset.

I use the following names for these services:

Skype: dilwyn_jones

MSN: dilwyn.jones@tesco.net

LONDON GROUP NEWS   Malcolm Cadman

Malcolm Cadman

The London QL and Quanta Group web page has been updated..

A lot of new pictures of Quanta Workshops from recent years, have been added, as well as many minor changes.

http://www.mcad.demon.co.uk/lquan.htm

I have also begun a new web page for "Retro Computing", to list hardware, books, etc, that are available.

http://www.mcad.demon.co.uk/retro1.htm

The Group is also considering organising a Quanta Workshop in 2009.

TURBOPTR NEWS   George Gwilt

Remarks made at the last QUANTA AGM helped George to make TurboPTR more user-friendly. The result is now available to download from:

http://web.ukonline.co.uk/george.gwilt/

Q-BRANCH NEWS

Roy Wood writes:

It is with great regret that I have decided to close QBranch in the next few months. I will collate the remaining stock and offer it for sale. (Not that I can do a Freddie Vacha and sell off a lot of outdated software at silly prices - I just don't have that much)

Roy Wood hard at work at one of the QUANTA Workshops

I have a lot of extra commitments at the moment and it has become increasingly hard for me to find the time to get on with the few orders I have received in the past few months. The mix up over that recent issue of QL Today demonstrated to me that I was doing no one any favours by trying to stay open as a QL business. I am going to carry on issuing the magazines for the remainder of this volume and I may be able to continue to contribute articles but the business has become so sporadic that I have tended to put off dealing with it and some of the delays in supplying goods to customers have been unacceptable.

The QL has been a large part of my life for the last 14 years and I have made a number of great friends during that time. I doubt I will abandon it completely. It is sad that, for the last couple of years at least, there has been little progress in any major way and very little new software written. In many ways the lack of new, or even, updated software has contributed to my lack of energy in the QL area. My parting words on this are that you must continue to evolve or else you will stagnate and decay. That said, new hardware development is unlikely due to the costs versus returns conundrum. I urge those of you still active in the community to become more so, write more and contribute more if you want it carry on.

I will, of course, still be available should anyone need help and I may turn up at the odd meeting.

TF SERVICES

Tony Firshman has decided that TF Services will, for the time being at least, take a lower profile on the QL scene as a result of increasing demands on his time and has withdrawn from advertising his services in the QL press. This does not mean that TF Services has closed - far from it, he will remain open for business and may even attend local QL shows, continue repairing QLs and so on, but at the moment he is (in his

own words) desperately busy renovating his house, moving Worldnews data centre and attending to other matters. He is not sure he could handle a lot of work coming in from adverts, so he felt it best to stop advertising for now.

Tony was one of the earliest QL traders in the mid-1980s and has produced a number of very important products for the QL over the years, from his original "Computer Cleaner" electrical device, the Minerva ROMs and the I^2C interface add-ons for the Mk2 Minerva, Hermes second processor, SuperHermes interfaces, Mplane, RomDisq and so on. For many years he has repaired innumerable QL systems (visitors to Quanta workshops could usually see him beavering away repairing something or other), and his son Ben often attended with him, demonstrating the Lego robot that was often a fixture of Tony's stands. Tony collaborated with Stuart Honeyball of Miracle Systems on some hardware projects in latter years, and the QL scene owes a lot to Tony for his work over the years. Long may it continue!

I am glad to be able to report that Tony will still be part of the QL scene, even if his adverts won't appear in the QL press in the near future at least.

And to close, Tony has said that "... my non-appearance at the next Quanta event (QL is 25 and the AGM) will be simply because I am singing with my church choir in Venice that weekend." The words of a very busy man!

Picture of Tony Firshman

A note from the Editor   John Gilpin

When this information from TF Services broke earlier in the year, the QUANTA Committee were obviously in shock at the news as they got the impression (wrongly, I hasten to say) that Tony was giving up the QL altogether.

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The Secretary's brief report of a discussion at a committee meeting, was published in QUANTA Magazine in Feb/March 2008, in which she wrote:-

"The committee were saddened to hear that Tony Firshman will no longer be involved in QL activity and wish him well for the future."

This caused great concern both to Tony and others as it gave all the wrong impression, and despite the Secretary's report of the meeting being accurate I would like to apologise to Tony both for my part in permitting this error to go unnoticed and for the considerable delay in acknowledging the same. The committee recognises Tony's many years of service to QUANTA membership and to the QL users world wide and continue to wish him well in the future. "Thank you Tony"

John Gilpin. (Joint editor - QUANTA Magazine.)

SPANISH QL & SPECTRUM FORUM

Javier Guerra writes:

We have a new URL for the Spanish QForum:

http://www.speccy.org/foro/viewforum.php?f=15

The old forum had a lot of spam

spanishqlforum.gif Spanish QForum Web Page

CONVERSIONS   Steve Poole

MICROSOFT BASIC

Even today you can download windows extensions on your PC to run programs using the old Microsoft Basics, which were the norm before Visual Basic appeared. Many such programs were printed in specialist magazines, and it can still be interesting to convert some of them to run on the QL.

Of course, the QL has a lot of compatibility with raw Basic, in the form of FOR-NEXT, GOTO, GOSUB and other such constructions. But there are still a few Microsoft specifics, the most common of which are LEFT$, MID$ and RIGHT$ used for string handling.

So for the sake of compatibility, I have written their SuperBASIC equivalents, which means that most Microsoft Basic programs can now be run directly on the QL without the need for any conversions on your part.

```
100 ::
110 REMark Conversions_bas, by S. Poole. V3feb2008.
120 CLEAR: CLS
130 :
140 q$='ABCDEFG': char=3: length=4
150 PRINT LEFT$(q$,char) MID$(q$,char,length) RIGHT$(q$,char)
160 :
170 DEFine FuNction LEFT$(L$,chr)
180  REMark Get string to the left of given character:
190  RETurn L$(1 TO chr-1)
200 END DEFine
210 :
220 DEFine FuNction MID$(M$,chr,lg)
230  REMark Get string from given character of given length:
240  RETurn M$(chr TO chr+lg-1)
250 END DEFine
260 :
270 DEFine FuNction RIGHT$(R$,chr)
280  REMark Get string to right of given character:
290  RETurn R$(chr+1 TO LEN(R$))
300 END DEFine
310 ::
```

End of listing.

HELPLINE: MY BLACK BOX

This was sent to me by Mike Kennedy (not a member at the time anyway), who gave permission for it to be included in the newsletter to help other "black box" owners. I am very grateful to Tony Firshman for assistance with some of the replies.

Hello Mr. Jones,

I stumbled across your web site about the QL (great site, thank you) after I recently got my old QL and Trump card out of the attic after many years in a cardboard box. I was delighted to see it still worked after all this time!

Nostalgia got the better of me and I found most of my floppy discs and microdrives still worked, although the microdrives were a bit rough and noisy.

Very soon I realized I could remember more SuperBASIC than I'd forgotten! Happy days again. I enjoyed using the QL back then and now I'm retired the interest is coming back again.

My grandson came to visit one weekend and I got him interested. He was surprised when I told him it was a computer from 1984 - he didn't think computers that old were much more than glorified calculators. He seemed amused by how quick and easy it was to write simple little programs in basic and soon he was asking me if he could use it.

Shortly after that I got another QL at a local car boot sale. The woman sold it to me for £1 because she thought it didn't work. All it needed was a new fuse in the mains plug and a bit of a clean. We set it up alongside my QL using a portable TV for display and you should see my grandson's face light up when he saw we'd bought him a QL of his own, even if it was only an unexpanded QL and a TV set! We even got a network cable and linked the two machines up so he could save and load to my floppy disc drive.

I have a few questions to ask if I could beg a moment of your time.

1.   The second QL is a bit dirty. I've washed the case with a moist cloth,

which got some of it off, but I'm loath to use any strong cleaners because I don't know what the plastic will withstand. Is it OK to use a soapy detergent, or is there a recommended cleaner or something? The last thing I want is to damage my grandson's pride and joy after spending so much on it :-)

TF> I use isopropyl alcohol, or white spirit as a last resort, and a toothbrush for the grooves.

2.   It only has 128K of memory. Is there any way of adding some more memory inside the case, e.g. by unplugging the ram chips and plugging in bigger ones? We're not too worried about the lack of a disc drive as we have a few microdrives and can use the network while we watch out for another £1 bargain at the car boot sale :-)

TF> Waste of time, as ram access is slower. Even though he doesn't use floppies, he should get a disk interface. Mind you the extra cost of a pair of disk drives will be small.

DJ> Most disk interfaces have extra memory on board - usually about 512K, although the Gold Card has 2MB and the Super Gold Card has 4MB. Most don't protrude much from the QL to increase clutter and space requirements, and usually don't mind if you connect them without a disk drive attached.

3.   Is there any way of networking with a PC? It might be handy to be able to download QL games from the Internet and print using the PC's printer.

TF> Serial port. 3.5 floppy to a PC emulator though is the best bet.

DJ> There is software called Sernet which is used to network a QL and a PC running a QL emulator by connecting the two computers with a serial cable. It can be fiddly to set up and of course is no use if the PC has no QL emulator. Sernet runs on a QL emulator, not in Windows. Details in an article on my web site http://www.dilwyn.uk6.net/gen/serial/serial.html (scroll down to the bottom of the page for the Sernet article). There is also a program called WXQT2 which is a Windows program for copying files between QL filing systems and DOS or Windows systems. It was written by Jonathan Hudson and you can download it from www.daria.co.uk/qdos/

4.   My QL has a toolkit in the trump card. Can we still get this toolkit for the other QL?

DJ> Toolkit 2 can be downloaded from my web site at http://www.dilwyn.uk6.net/pe/index.html Transferring files to a QL floppy disk can be a little bit tricky if you have not done so before, but there are a couple of pages of advice on my web site about this. Go to my home page at www.dilwyn.uk6.net/index.html and scroll down to near the bottom of the page where you'll find links to a couple of pages about transferring files and for those like yourself returning to the QL after some time.

TF> Most floppy interfaces will have toolkit II of course.

5.   The microdrives work, but they are rough and noisy sounding and don't inspire confidence. Is there a quick fix for this?

TF> Check the rollers have not risen up. Otherwise no.

6.   Does anyone still sell the little plastic feet which prop up the QL? I didn't get any with the second QL.

TF> I don't think I have any left - I will check.

DJ> Try the QL traders to see if they have any spare. List of traders on my web site. eBay can be a good source of second hand QL bits and pieces. Also, try Malcolm Cadman at the London QL group, as he acquires and sells a lot of old QL hardware. His email address is ql@mcad.demon.co.uk. Quanta treasurer, John Gilpin, also gets second user hardware from time to time, you could contact him at treasurer@quanta.org.uk to see if he has any spare.

7.   How can I connect a PC monitor to the QL? I have a spare VGA monitor, if only we could work out what type of adaptor cable was needed to connect the QL.

TF> Not practicable to a standard QL.

DJ> This question has been asked of me many times, and I have never yet found a solution to this. Of course, anyone who could come up with a suitable cable or interface to adapt the QL TTL RGB video signals to an analogue VGA or SVGA monitor input would be on to a winner I'm sure, based on the number of times I've been asked this question!

8.   The TV set is OK for short use, but it doesn't have a good picture. It has a scart socket on the back, is there any way of connecting this for a

better picture?

TF> Yes - I can do a lead for £10. There should be second hand ones - try London Quanta. (see Malcolm Cadman email address above)

DJ> Richard Cook wrote an article in QL Today magazine about this very subject several years ago. The article is available on my web site. It does involve soldering and obtaining a few resistors and the relevant plugs. See the article at http://www.dilwyn.uk6.net/docs/hardware/index.html

9.   The network works OK with the little cable we use, which is only about 4 or 5 foot long. How long can a network cable be? It would be nice if we could extend it into the bedroom he uses while staying with us, which I guess would need a cable of about 16 to 20 foot long if it went straight through the wall.

TF> I use one at home that is 150 foot long. It *must* though be a twisted pair. One pair of a cat5 cable would do connected to std 3.5 mono jack plugs.

DJ> Also, see the QL manual, Concepts section, Network page, which says: "If you are planning to connect several QLs on the network, or use a long piece of cable, then you should wire it up with low-capacitance twin pair cable, such as 3 amp light flex or bell-wire. Take care to connect the centre of each jack to each other, and the outsides to each other. You will find that although the software can handle 63 stations, the hardware will not drive more than about 100m of cable, depending on what type it is. If you are only connecting a few machines with the leads supplied, you need not worry."

A NEW WAY TO PAY   John Gilpin

I commented in an article published in the April/May issue of QUANTA Magazine that moves were in hand to set up a scheme whereby members could use the QUANTA Web Site to pay their annual membership subscriptions via PayPal. I am pleased to confirm that the scheme is now up and running and I hope that this will help not only our overseas members but our UK ones as well.

As far as I am aware, QUANTA has never increased its membership subscription which is £14.00 per year and includes UK and NI postage for the magazine (hard copy). The extra £3.00 charged to overseas members was used to cover the additional postage charges outside the UK.

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Over the years, postage rates have risen tremendously and today, the second class inland rate for a 100 gram letter (the QUANTA Magazine normally falls within this bracket) is £0.27 while the equivalent European rate is £1.36 and the "rest of the world" rate is £2.52. These last two rates can be reduced by using Printed Paper Rates at £1.07 and £1.56 respectively.

Fortunately (for the QUANTA bank account) we now only publish 6 bi-monthly issues per year but even this reveals postage costs per member of £1.62 (UK), £6.42 (Europe) and £9.36 (RoW) per year. If we continue to accept the UK rate as part of membership, this shows that European members cost £4.80 and RoW members £7.74 more than UK members.

Trials over the last few months have proved that we are now able to produce and distribute the QUANTA Magazine electronically (by email) and this has resulted in us being able to offer the following alternatives.
To:-

A).   distribute the QUANTA Magazine electronically (by email) in Adobe .pdf format (with free Adobe Reader if required). Accepting this option means that the Magazine will be delivered without any postage supplement and therefore only the full membership subscription of £14.00 per annum will be charged.

B).   print and distribute the QUANTA Magazine by printed paper rate post to addresses in Europe. This option will incur a postage supplement of £5.00 in addition to the membership subscription of £14.00 making a total charge of £19.00 per annum.

C).   print and distribute the QUANTA Magazine by printed paper rate post to addresses outside Europe and the UK (RoW regions). This will incur a postage supplement of £8.00 in addition to the membership subscription of £14.00 making a total charge of £22.00 per annum.

The Banks and Credit Card Companies are always on the lookout for ways to reduce (with the hope of eventual complete elimination of) Credit Card Fraud and it has been strongly recommended that third party transactions - that's transactions where the card holder is not present to carry out the payment themselves - should no longer be offered. As QUANTA no longer have the facility to accept Credit and Debit Card payments, (one of the QL Traders used to carry out these transactions on our behalf) arrangements have now been made to use the PayPal Scheme available from our web site at:- www.quanta.org.uk Just click on the flashing "BUY NOW" button to navigate to the Membership Subscription page.

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Contrary to popular belief, you do NOT need to hold a PayPal Account but you can pay into QUANTA's PayPal Account using your Credit or Debit Card. We are assured that security is paramount and that there will be no need to fill in the usual membership subscription form as all the necessary information will be passed on directly to me with your payment details.

As was always the case when accepting payment by Credit or Debit Card, a small handling charge of £1.00 is made for each transaction. Any necessary currency changes are taken care of by your Card Company so that effectively you will pay in your local currency. Using the PayPal scheme you will pay one of the following rates for your membership depending upon the choices you make at the time of renewal.

A) £15.00   Being £14.00 full membership + £1.00 Card Surcharge for UK and NI members receiving a posted magazine or ALL members requesting an electronic magazine delivered by email.

B) £20.00   Being £14.00 full membership + £1.00 Card Surcharge plus £5.00 Postage Supplement to addresses in Europe.

C) £23.00   Being £14.00 full membership + £1.00 Card Surcharge plus £8.00 Postage Supplement to addresses outside Europe.

D) £5.00   Being the current membership subscription for Associate Members. There are no surcharges for this class of member since their subscription is paid at the same time as their associated full member's subscription.

It has been agreed by committee that these new rates will become payable on all membership renewals from January 1st 2009 and that since there is effectively no increase in subscription rates, no special resolution is required.

There are a small number of members who submitted their Card details in the old way, earlier this year. They may have noticed that their cards have NOT been charged and I would like them to pay by the PayPal Scheme outlined above from January 2009 and to accept their membership for 2008 without charge. Their membership privileges have not been restricted in any way. If any member has any comments to make regarding this matter please get in touch with me.   treasurer@quanta.org.uk

There has been some discussion recently about getting the QPC2 emulator to run on Linux using the WINE system.

Wine is an Open Source implementation of the Windows API on platforms such as Linux and Unix.

Think of Wine as a compatibility layer for running Windows programs. Wine does not require Microsoft Windows, as it is a completely free alternative implementation of the Windows API consisting of 100% non-Microsoft code, however Wine can optionally use native Windows DLLs if they are available. Wine provides both a development toolkit for porting Windows source code to Unix as well as a program loader, allowing many unmodified Windows programs to run on x86-based Unixes, including Linux, FreeBSD, Mac OS X, and Solaris. Wine is free software. The licensing terms are the GNU Lesser General Public License version 2.1.

Initial attempts by various users to get QPC2 running were not too promising, with problems reported including keyboard auto repeats making QPC2 less than usable.

Then Norman Dunbar wrote a message on the mailing list on 25th June, saying that he had finally got a copy of QPC2 running on his OpenSuse Linux system without the keyboard problems:

"All (!) I did was install OpenSuse 11.0, patch to the latest releases etc, installed "wine-0.9.64_aka_1.0.rc3-2.1" from the OpenSuse DVD and everything 'just worked'! My settings on startup are as follows :

Display Driver = DirecDraw HAL
Colour depth : High COlour
Resolution : 800 x 600
Window Mode : ticked, 800 x 600
Keep aspect ratio : ticked
Foreground Prio : Normal
Background Prio : Lowest
Memory : 16 MB

Country Code : 44
AltGr function : AltGr

Everything else is blank, unchecked or not selected - accordingly!"
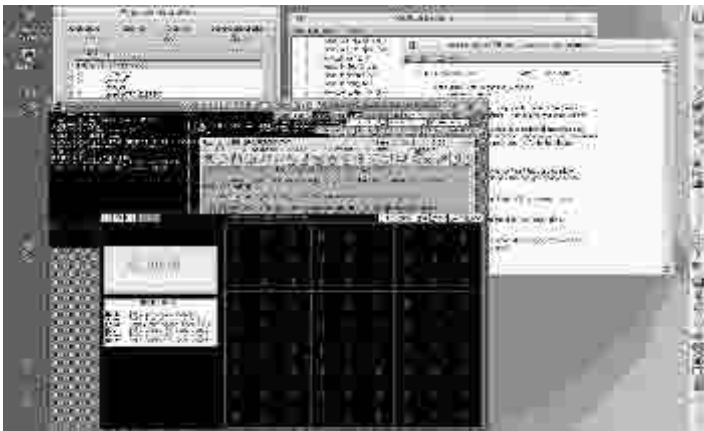
Then, true to form, Marcel Kilgus got on the case, and sent the following message the next day:

"Wine 1.0 has been released a week ago and my tests so far were pretty promising. It worked very well, even though I was only able to check it out from work over a remote connection, i.e. the PC running QPC was 10km away! Still it was fully usable and responsive, keyboard entries being no problem at all. So I suggest anybody who wants to run QPC under Linux should check out the final 1.0 Wine release."

Then, during mid August, Alex Wells let me know he had got the emulator running with WINE on his system too:

"QPC2 on Kubuntu v8.04 Linux with 'Wine' v1 - running very smoothly, seems to be at least as fast as M$ environment. Not tried printing etc. yet, but George Gwilt's excellent Soduku is great. But: I need to stop Wine stealing the QL's Alt key."

I asked Alex if he could send me a screenshot to show what QPC2 running on the WINE system might look like, and I'm very grateful to him for the following screen dump and notes.

QPC-Wine Linux Screen shot.

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1280x800 Linux display, running "Kubuntu 8.04", and showing a generalised icon for QPC.

The computer has Windows and Linux partitions:
MS "XP" is in drive "C", known to my Linux as "/win_c" and "../drive_c" in Wine.

XP cannot read Linux partitions. Linux reads/writes in all mounted partitions.

The screen shot shows 4 main windows:

Wine Config - shown to illustrate drive mapping only, not normally needed. Some Windows partitions are shown in "Wine Config". The QXL.win and QPC folders are in /win_d

QxlWin Explorer shows a directory "Astro" and a text-file "Astro_ReadME_txt" from a "QXL.win" file in "win_d".

QPC II 3.34, (usually 800x600) running QD and Sudoku.

Not tried printing in QPC-Wine yet, but just displayed a jpeg picture in QPC from a USB floppy disk.

Yippee !!! Huge thank-yous are due to all the Linux, Wine, QL (and MS) contributors."

You can get further details of the WINE system from from the Wine HQ site:

<center>http://www.winehq.org/</center>

The current stable release version is 1.0, while there is also a "development" version 1.1.2. Notes on the various versions are available from the above web page address.

ERRATA   Steve Poole

[Steve has, as usual, kept in touch during the summer months and his usual high observation level has come up with a number of anomalies which I don't think are all his fault. My apologies to Steve and our readers for any errors down to the editorial team - Ed]

A.   I am afraid the jinx appears to have struck again... Page 32 of vol 25, Iss 3, the routine begins with REPeat 'input_loop', reused on lines 120 and 150. But lines 150 and 160 are labelled simply as 'loop'. So it doesn't work.

No doubt readers will have corrected this by themselves. But I can't help thinking that magazine listings would benefit by being posted on a downloadable web site in prog.rtf format, where it would be easy to make any modifications to them if need be, so readers could get the latest versions at short notice. Reduced stress guaranteed!

[Discussions with the QUANTA WebMaster regarding features like Steve suggests above are ongoing. - "Watch This Space" - as they say - Ed]

B.   I just typed in Hugh Rooms' program and found one or two problems.

Firstly I have set my QPC2 screen size to 512x256 to obtain non-elliptic circles. Therefore line 180 needs to be adapted to : Window#wc%,300,206,0,0.

Also when running the code twice, #0 paper and ink are both 0, so the text is black on black. So add Ink#0,7 to line 210, but this will still leave #0 unreadable if you break!

Otherwise the code works well, but of course it won't be compatible to unexpanded QL's. But congratulations to Hugh all the same!

C.   I am afraid the code as printed somehow seems to have got garbled and should read :
…
190 ct=0: s=1E-200: out=1E150: last=1024: n=2
200 Dim t(last,2): f$=FILL$(' ',18)
…
The mag somehow gets n=2200 etc, so presumably there has been a line-feed problem with the word-processor, as I have just checked my master program and it is OK.

[Thanks for your observations Steve. The last one is certainly the result of editorial errors. - Sorry - Ed]

TRADER'S CORNER

QUANTA recommends the following trading members to supply all your QL requirements, information and advice.

Trader's Advertisements can be viewed at:
http://www.quanta.org.uk/traders

A PLATFORM GAME   Steve Poole

[And to round off this issue, here's one of Steve Poole's games to while away the Christmas Hours after a generous helping of figgy pudding! - Ed]

During the 1990's, a very popular class of PC games were the so-called 'Platform Games'. To my knowledge no Basic version of such a game has ever been written for the QL. So to set things straight, here is a simple one, especially so that younger readers can see how the program works.

Very little introduction to such games is necessary. To play, use the following keys to move the man through the labyrinth: 'a'=up&left, 'z'=up&right, 'o'=left, 'p'=right. (For 'qwerty' or other keyboards, change these keycodes on line 260). If you step on an empty space you fall until there is a floor. Pick up fruit ('.') in the order that you wish, but collect letters ('a' to 'x') in strictly alphabetical order. When all are collected the game ends letting you know how long you took, but if you pick up a letter out of sequence you lose... As this is a game of memory and reflexes, of course, you race against the clock...

At around a hundred and fifty lines, (including Remarks, spacing and DATA), the game is already long enough to type in. Improve it by redefining fruit as objects which perform specific actions at specific places. Or have fun redesigning the labyrinths in the data statements, and then passing them on to fellow enthusiasts with a RESTORE line at the head of the program to select the new maze. (In DATA, z represents spaces, y fruit, alphabetic characters represent themselves, and x's are platform units. This numeric-variable system simplifies data entry, by eliminating the need for cumbersome quotation marks). Under SMSQ/E, you can swap the x's for underscore symbols to improve the readability of the DATA.

Many platform games also divide the terrain up into adjacent screens which are scrolled or panned into view as the man moves. I did consider dividing the terrain into nine screens which would appear automatically as necessary, (while using character CSIZE 3,1). The grid is compatible with such a treatment, which would place a great deal of extra strain on your memory power. But that would make the program too long for most people to type in, and I think it is quite challenging enough as it stands.

Also, I did try my hand at generating random mazes, but these generally led to invalid configurations. The most awkward part of the coding was, surprisingly, flashing the cursor correctly. The solution was to append a 0 or 1 to the 'pr' procedure parameters, (in place of cumbersome REMarks, which cannot be inserted between in-line statements), to show at a glance whether the call was to turn the cursor on or off. That quickly got rid of a good two hours of confusion, as it made it clear if the cursor was on or off at the last call... The added parameter is of course just a dummy one. As usual, this new found clarity enabled me to get rid of whole blocks of contrived code in a trice.

The program took about two very rainy days to finalise, including writing this article, whilst on holiday in the Alps, on an old '98 portable PC. Then all I had to do was to play the game to make sure it contained no bugs, as did Bruno Coativy who beta-tested it subsequently and found lots of incompatibilities with standard QLs and QXLs.

Do try to improve the code, but be very careful to trap all pauses using INKEY\$(#1) and concatenate them into one value to test with SELect, so that the game is almost as rapid in Basic as it would be if written in machine code. I am rather enjoying writing such games in SuperBASIC, an activity I assumed as nearly impossible a few years ago!

You can contact me on my dedicated terminal at stevepoole@minitel.net if you have any queries. (This latter device is virus-free but cannot handle attachments). But contact QL Today or QUANTA Magazine if you wish your comments to be taken up by the magazine...

Happy 'Q'- Leaping on the Platforms,
Steve Poole.

[Thanks Steve and Bruno Coativy for your support during 2008. We all look forward to your contributions in 2009. Merry Christmas to you both. - Ed]

```
110 REMark Platform_bas, by S.Poole, v2sept2007
120  REMark for QL Today : Beta-test by B.Coativy.
130 :
140 REMark Configure the screen:
150  CLEAR: RESTORE : OPEN#1,con_16: WINDOW 512,256,0,0
160  PAPER 2: INK 7: CLS: CSIZE 2,0: OVER 0
170  WINDOW 306,256,100,0: BORDER 2,4: RANDOMISE DATE
180 :
190 REMark Initialise global variable mnemonics:
200  REMark prepare 23x23 grid,  1+(3x7)+1 :
210   aa=2: zz=22: DIM gr(23,23)
220  REMark pause, man_x, man_y, start_time, all_fruit:
```

```
230  ps=9: mx=11: my=22: D1=DATE: win=75
240  REMark key$, man$, fruit_count, character_count, exit:
250  i$='': m$='§': fr_ct=0: chr_ct=97: xit=120
260  REMark direction selection keys:
270  left =CODE('o'): right=CODE('p')
280  up_lf=CODE('a'): up_rg=CODE('z')
290  :
300  REMark character CODE() values for DATA items:
310  REMark avoids using cluttering quotation marks:
320  a=97 : b=98 : c=99 : d=100 : e=101 : f=102 : g=103
330  h=104: i=105: j=106: k=107: L=108: m=109: n=110
340  o=111: p=112: q=113: r=114: s=115: t=116: u=117
350  v=118: w=119
360  :
370  REMark other DATA: y = fruit, z = spaces, x = platforms
380  x=120: y=121: z=122
390 ::
400 REMark Set up and print out the grid:
410 FOR ff=aa TO zz
420   FOR jj=aa TO zz
430     READ rd: SELect rd
440       =x: r$='_' : =y: r$='.' : =z: r$=' '
450       =a TO w:  r$=CHR$(rd)
460     END SELect
470     AT ff,jj: PRINT r$: gr(ff,jj)=rd
480   END FOR jj
490 END FOR ff: pr -1,m$,1
500  :
510 REMark main game:
520 REPeat move_man
530   REMark test all other key pauses:
540   pr -1,m$,0: i$=i$&INKEY$(#1,ps): cd=CODE(i$)
550   REMark Don't jump if there is a roof above:
560   above=gr(my-1,mx): roof=0: oy=my
570   SELect above= x , y , a TO w: roof=1
575   :
580   REMark move man:
590   SELect cd
600     =left : mx=mx-1: IF mx<aa: mx=aa: END IF : jump
610     =right: mx=mx+1: IF mx>zz: mx=zz: END IF : jump
620     =up_lf: IF roof: GO TO 700
630         mx=mx-1: IF mx<aa: mx=aa
640         my=my-1: IF my<aa: my=aa
645         REMark Don't jump sideways:
650         jump: IF oy=my: mx=mx+1: jump
660     =up_rg: IF roof: GO TO 700
670         mx=mx+1: IF mx>zz: mx=zz
680         my=my-1: IF my<aa: my=aa: END IF
690         jump: IF oy=my: mx=mx-1: jump
700   END SELect : pr -1,m$,1: i$=INKEY$(#1,ps)
710 END REPeat move_man
720  :
730 DEFine PROCedure lost
740  INK 3: pr -1,'_',1: INK 7
750  AT 0,0: CLS 3: PRINT'You Lost on'!CHR$(chr_ct)!!
760  PRINT;':'!fr_ct!'Fruit'
770  BEEP 12345,255: i$=INKEY$(#1,500): game_over
780 END DEFine
790  :
800 DEFine PROCedure won
810  D2=DATE: time=(D2-D1)/60: AT 0,0: CLS 3
820  PRINT 'You won in'!time!'Minutes'
830  i$=INKEY$(#1,500): game_over
840 END DEFine
```

```
850 :
860 DEFine PROCedure game_over
870  AT 24,5: CLS 3: PRINT' Another? (y/n)'
880  i$=INKEY$(#1,-1): IF i$=='y': RUN
890  CSIZE 0,0: WINDOW 256,206,256,0: CLS: STOP
900 END DEFine
910 :
920 DEFine PROCedure jump
930  pr -1,m$,1: gxy=gr(my,mx)::: REMark AT 0,0: CLS 3
940 :
950  REMark You stepped onto thin air (z) ?:
960  IF gxy=z THEN
970    REMark Then keep falling:
980    pr -1,m$,0: my=my+1: gxy=gr(my,mx)
990    IF oy=my: RETurn      : REMark Only jump higher.
1000   IF gxy=chr_ct: GO TO 1130: REMark Fell on letter.
1010   IF gxy=y: GO TO 1060    : REMark Fell on fruit.
1020   IF my=zz: RETurn      : REMark Fell to bottom.
1030   GO TO 930           : REMark Keep falling.
1040 END IF
1050 :
1060 REMark Fruit (y) gets you points:
1070 IF gxy=y THEN
1080   BEEP 1234,5: fr_ct=fr_ct+1: gr(my,mx)=x: gxy=x
1085   ::: REMark AT  0,16: PRINT fr_ct!Win
1090   IF fr_ct=win AND chr_ct=xit: BEEP 12345,6: won
1100  pr 0,'.',0: pr 0,'_',1: RETurn
1110 END IF
1120 :
1130 REMark You fell on the right letter:
1140 IF gxy=chr_ct THEN
1150   BEEP 12345,12: chr_ct=chr_ct+1
1155   ::: REMark AT 0,0: PRINT CHR$(chr_ct)!Xit
1160   pr 0,'_',0: gr(my,mx)=x: pr -1,m$,0
1170   IF fr_ct=win AND chr_ct=xit: BEEP 12345,6: won
1180   REMark No other letter will do:
1190   ELSE IF gxy>=a AND gxy<=w: lost
1200 END IF : pr -1,m$,1
1210 END DEFine
1220 :
1230 DEFine PROCedure pr(ovr,p$,on_or_off)
1240  OVER ovr: AT my,mx: PRINT p$: OVER 0
1250 END DEFine
1260 :
1270 REMark letters=themselves, except y=fruit, z=spaces
1280 REMark character x are platform units:
1290 REMark Why not design your own diabolical grids?
1300 REMark Note provisional 3x3 blocks of 7x7 sub-grids :
1310 :
1320 DATA x,z,x,x,y,x,x,  z,z,x,y,z,z,x,  x,z,z,z,z,y,x
1330 DATA x,z,y,x,x,z,y,  y,z,x,x,x,z,z,  y,x,x,z,x,y,z
1340 DATA z,x,y,v,x,x,z,  x,x,x,y,x,x,x,  x,z,y,z,z,x,x
1350 DATA x,z,y,x,y,x,x,  z,x,y,z,x,x,z,  x,z,x,y,x,x,x
1360 DATA x,z,y,z,p,z,x,  y,z,x,x,x,t,z,  x,x,x,z,z,x,x
1370 DATA x,z,y,x,x,z,y,  z,x,x,y,x,z,x,  z,x,y,x,z,x,z
1380 DATA x,z,y,z,x,x,x,  x,y,z,z,x,x,z,  z,x,x,y,z,x,y
1390 :
1400 DATA z,y,x,x,x,y,z,  x,z,x,x,y,x,x,  x,z,z,x,x,y,x
1410 DATA x,y,z,y,x,x,z,  x,x,x,x,z,i,z,  z,z,x,z,y,z,x
1420 DATA x,y,x,z,f,x,x,  x,x,y,z,z,z,x,  z,x,x,d,x,z,y
1430 DATA x,z,j,x,x,z,x,  x,w,x,x,z,z,y,  x,x,z,k,z,x,x
1440 DATA x,z,x,x,z,y,x,  z,x,z,y,x,h,x,  x,z,x,x,z,s,x
1450 DATA x,z,z,y,x,x,z,  z,y,x,q,z,z,x,  x,z,x,z,y,z,x
1460 DATA z,z,x,x,x,y,z,  z,y,x,n,x,z,z,  z,z,x,x,y,x,x
```

```
1470 :
1480 DATA y,z,y,x,z,x,x,  x,x,e,z,x,x,z,  x,y,x,z,z,x,y
1490 DATA y,x,c,x,x,z,z,  z,x,x,z,o,x,y,  x,z,L,x,x,z,z
1500 DATA x,u,x,x,g,z,z,  z,x,y,z,z,x,y,  y,y,x,z,z,x,x
1510 DATA x,z,z,z,r,x,x,  x,z,z,z,x,x,x,  z,x,x,y,z,x,y
1520 DATA b,x,z,z,x,z,z,  x,a,z,z,y,x,z,  x,y,z,z,x,z,m
1530 DATA y,z,y,y,z,x,x,  z,z,y,x,z,y,z,  z,y,y,z,z,y,x
1540 DATA x,y,y,x,x,y,y,  y,x,x,x,x,y,y,  y,x,x,y,x,x,x
1550 ::
```

End of listing.

SUBGROUP MEETINGS

THE WEST MIDLANDS QL USER GROUP

This long-running group has moved back to its previous venue, the Queens Head pub in the City Centre. Meetings remain open to Quanta members and non-members alike. The Queens Head is in Steelhouse Lane, Central Birmingham, four minutes walk from Snow Hill main-line railway station and has ample street parking nearby.

Meetings are usually on the first and third Monday of each month (but not on Bank holidays unless the previous one was cancelled for that reason). After your first meeting you're expected to pay £1 each time towards the organisation and monthly newsletter costs - except once a year when the group pays all those who attend a pound instead (We provide food twice a year for those who attend the AGM and the group's birthday party) and at meetings we discuss all sorts of things, QL-related and otherwise, usually from about 8:20 pm. onwards till 10:30 or later. The group owns QL hardware, a disk library and subscribes to relevant magazines. People can join the mailing list for £3.50 per year, even if they can't attend regularly.

The contact number is Mike Bedford White's, on 0121 605 4438, anytime after 11 am.

Email: mikebwhite@blueyonder.co.uk

QUANTA DORSET SUBGROUP

Meetings are held, on the second Sunday of each month at the Merley Community Centre in Harrier Drive, Merley, just south of Wimborne Minster. Time: 2.00 pm. to 5.00 pm. All are welcome.

John Meadows Tel: 01202 576189, or John Mason, 01425 275894.

LONDON QL AND QUANTA GROUP

Meetings are held in the School Room, which is the basement of the Borough Welsh Congregational Chapel, 90, Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1. This is almost opposite the junction with Marshalsea Road, at the other end of which, 5 minutes walk away, is the Borough Underground Station. Free parking is easily available in Southwark Bridge Road for road users, Cyclists are welcome.

Members currently each pay a subscription of £30 per year towards the cost of the hire of the hall and a small additional charge is made for tea/coffee - biscuits are then provided free.

Please bring your QL equipment if possible, all types welcome, e.g., PC portable running emulators. The Group has some systems stored at the venue for its use. In addition, there are lots of donated second user equipment, books, magazines, etc, available for purchase.

Time: 2.00 pm. to 6.00 pm., on the second Sunday of the month.

No meetings are held in either December - winter break, or August summer break. Giving 10 meetings a year.

Malcolm Cadman: Tel: 020 8691 5780

email: QL@mcad.demon.co.uk

NEMQLUG - THE NORTH EAST MANCHESTER QL USER GROUP

Meetings are held at 181, Urmston Lane, Stretford, Manchester. M32 9EH (Near Junction 7 of M60 Motorway - Was Junction 7 M63 Motorway). Our informal meetings start at 7 p.m. and finish at 11 pm. All welcome.

Meets on the last Thursday of each month (except December).

John/Sarah Gilpin 0161-865 2872 (thegilpins@btopenworld.com)

SCOTTISH QL USERS GROUP

S QLUG meets at George Gwilt's home every second Sunday in the month. Please contact George Gwilt before coming to get the location.

Geogwilt@aol.com

SOLENT SUBGROUP

M eets at Botley Market Hall, all welcome. Park at the back and use side entrance.

1st Saturday of the month from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm.

Graham Evans, Tel: 023 8040 3350.

SURREY QUANTA SUBGROUP (SQSG)

T he group is currently trying other venues in the Leatherhead - Epsom area. If you plan to attend but do not get our emails, please phone or email Ken Bain for the latest location.

Meetings are 8.00 to 10.00 pm. On the last Wednesday of each month except December.

Ken Bain - 01932 - 347 432 (to midnight), kenb@bcs.org.uk

SUSSEX QL USER GROUP

C urrently without a meeting place, anyone interested should contact Keith Mitchell or Roy Wood.

Roy Wood, 01273 430501 or Keith Mitchell, 01903 742263.